

March 6

*I took the train to Yokohama yesterday and was at Shinagawa Station when a couple got on with their young son, who was maybe a year and a half old. For the first few minutes the boy sat on his mother's lap. Then he started fussing and made it clear that he wanted to look out the window. The father said something that sounded, in tone, like, "You just looked out the window two days ago." Then he sighed and bent forward to remove his son's shoes. The mother, meanwhile, went through her bag and pulled out a small towel, which she then spread upon the seat. The boy stood upon it in his stocking feet, and as he considered the passing landscape he smacked his palms against the glass. "Ba," he said, and I wondered if that was a word or just a sound. "Ba, ba."*

*We all rode along for a pleasant ten minutes, and, shortly before the train reached their stop, the father put the boy's shoes back on. His wife returned the towel to her purse, and then, using a special wipe, she cleaned her son's fingerprints off the glass. Coming from France where people regularly put their feet on the train seats, and from America where they not only pound the windows, but carve their initials into them, the family's display of consideration was almost freakish. Ba, I've since decided, is Japanese for "Watch carefully, and do what we do."*

—David Sedaris, *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*